



Gilbert Chamber of Commerce

Thursday, August 19, 2010
Remarks by Gov. Jan Brewer

Thank you for allowing me to spend some time with you today -- to tell you what we've done to improve the business environment in Arizona in less than 600 days since I took the Oath of Office as Governor.

First, we had to deal with the consequences of five high-rolling years BEFORE I took office, when government grew far beyond what Arizonans could afford.

I faced a state budget deficit of nearly five billion dollars -- across two fiscal years -- and a federal government whose unfunded mandates and sweetheart deals were stealing Arizona's freedom and threatening to bankrupt our state.

Wholesale change was needed -- and -- the truth is -- in less than 600 days, WE'VE CHANGED EVERYTHING -- and, we've changed it for the BETTER.

We've changed the size of government.

We've changed the way government does business.

We've changed our policies and our priorities and the direction of our state. I believe that change -- the Arizona Comeback -- started in earnest on May 18th when voters overwhelmingly approved Proposition 100, telling us they understood the depth of the financial crisis in Arizona.

They told us they approved Proposition 100 for our educational system, for our universities and community colleges, for our public safety and for our most vulnerable.

But, I think we all recognized that Proposition 100 wasn't a cure-all. Though we've streamlined and reduced the size of government more than at any time before in state history, we're facing a one billion dollar deficit going into fiscal year 2012, which without new action will continue to grow in FY 2013. So, what are we doing about it?

Plenty.

We've permanently reduced state general fund spending by over two point two billion dollars and the state employee count by more than 10 percent.

We've created a new attitude in state government – one which recognizes that only the PRIVATE sector can create meaningful jobs.

Quite a novel concept, isn't it?

The greatest thing a government can do for business is create an environment of stability and predictability – work with balanced budgets, provide for a safe society – including secure borders – and foster an educated workforce.

My basic philosophy is that government just needs to get out of the way and let you -- our TRUE job creators -- grow your businesses the way YOU want to – not the way the STATE wants you to.

My first official act as Governor was to issue a moratorium on rules, to reduce the regulatory burden on Arizona businesses.

And, I've been calling for tax reform since March 2009.

We must establish a more friendly tax code to retain existing employers, attract new investment capital and create high wage, sustainable jobs.

We must reform the business property tax, which currently discourages high-paying manufacturing jobs because we overtax capital investment.

I support a RESPONSIBLE package to spur job creation and our state's economic recovery – BUT IT MUST BE A PACKAGE THAT THE STATE CAN AFFORD.

And, when it comes to encouraging job creation, I'm committed to preparing for the future with new ideas and innovation.

That's why, by Executive Order, on June 29th I established the Arizona Commerce Authority and a private-sector leadership board focused on growing and diversifying Arizona's economy and creating quality jobs – including jobs in rural Arizona.

This quasi-public Authority replaces the old Commerce Department. We're introducing a 21st Century approach to advance Arizona's economy.

This new Authority is coordinating and integrating the efforts of key partners like Science Foundation Arizona -- our universities -- regional economic development groups -- and local communities – all working together to secure success for the State of Arizona.

I've committed 10 million dollars to advance its mission through its approach to economic development.

Meanwhile, we've attracted over one billion dollars in new capital investment.

You've heard me state that since becoming Governor, I've helped create 25-hundred jobs. Today, I want to share with you that in just the past six weeks – with my meetings with corporate leaders – we've more than DOUBLED that number.

And there's more coming – my team at the Commerce Authority is finalizing details with several more companies and we will be announcing even more jobs for Arizonans in the coming weeks.

Businesses across ALL sectors have added 25-thousand jobs since the job loss peak of December 2009.

For example:

- eBay just announced its decision to expand its presence in Arizona,

- Neptune Orient Lines moved here from Oakland, California – and international shipments are being coordinated right here in the southwest – the opportunities are incredible and businesses are recognizing it in new, innovative ways.

- Just last week we announced Spanish solar manufacturer Rioglass Solar will locate to Surprise and create jobs for Arizonans.

The company produces curved glass sheets used in solar technology, adding to the significant progress Arizona is making to become a global leader in the renewable energy sector.

In fact, "Business Facilities" a national publication and location advisor for site selection -- for both solar energy manufacturing and the alternative energy industry – has now ranked Arizona as the "solar king."

They noted Arizona offers "the highest solar power potential in the nation, and the state is by far the leading producer of equipment to capture these rays."

This follows our efforts to attract renewable energy projects to Arizona ---

- Suntech Power Holdings chose Goodyear for the Chinese-based company's first U.S. manufacturing plant.

- Tower Automotive and Linamar -- which are suppliers for Stirling Energy System's SunCatcher dishes – are locating to Arizona.

And Tucson is already home to some of the world's largest photovoltaic manufacturers, including Schletter, Global Solar Energy, and SOLON.

I'm ever mindful of the role education plays in job creation and sustaining the Arizona Comeback.

If we are going to build the economy for Arizona's second century, we must today begin preparing students and expect them to reach high academic standards.

To that end, we've enacted some of the most sweeping reforms in education that the state has seen.

Arizona has a strong tradition of innovation in education. Our charter schools and open enrollment policies are considered among the nation's strongest.

And now, we've added more options to ensure our students succeed. We're allowing students who have mastered skills to move on to college when their families decide they are ready. And we're making sure that students don't move on if they're not ready.

Schools will be more transparent, so families will know at a glance if their school is making the grade.

Gone are confusing labels like "performing" or "performing plus".

Instead, I called for the system to grade schools by the same grades that students get: A, B, C, D and F.

How's that for transparency?

And we're also making sure our schools are able to recruit the talent they need by allowing alternative certification options so that we can get the best and brightest from every field into our classrooms.

We're giving teachers access to more student data so they can tailor their lessons to the needs of individual students.

And with that same data we can make sure we're succeeding in the classroom. We can make sure the system is, in fact, improving.

We're making sure the teachers -- to whom we trust our children's education -- are, in fact, helping them learn, in every classroom, every year.

We do this by making student performance a part of their own evaluations.

We're asking more of the students themselves, with new academic standards and increased requirements in math and science.

And from what I know of students in Arizona, and our can-do spirit, I think they're up for the challenge!

These changes have created a new momentum statewide for improving our education system and we won't stop until every child is career and college ready.

Our universities also play an important role both in educating and preparing students and in innovating and growing our economy.

First, of course, in order for our state to be competitive as a location for companies and to propel growth, we need to increase the number of Arizonans with a college degree.

One of my first directives to the higher education system when I became Governor was to increase the number of college graduates -- and to do it in a more cost effective way.

Second, while we're focused on costs, we must never lose sight of the students themselves -- we must ensure that they are actually making it THROUGH college.

To do that, maybe it's time to stop thinking about rewards based on enrollment -- but, instead, reward on COMPLETION -- make sure our funding system provides incentives to students to make it all the way through college.

A particular interest of mine is to expand university and private incubator/accelerator programs to develop more Arizona-grown businesses.

Ventana Medical Systems -- headquartered in Oro Valley -- is now one of the world's leading developers and manufacturers of medical diagnostic instruments and re-agent systems. And, the Tucson area now is developing a biomedical cluster.

Meanwhile, our Aerospace and Defense industry remains critical to the state economy.

This is why we celebrate the recent federal contracts awarded to Boeing and the selection of Luke Air Force Base as a preferred training site for the F-35 squadrons.

Our hope is that Tucson International Airport will ultimately prevail in the future for the F-35 mission, especially with its continued strength in the training of foreign pilots in the F-16.

I cannot over emphasize how important the 162nd Fighter Wing, Marine Corps Station Yuma, and Luke AFB are to the vitality of the Arizona Comeback, as are Arizona's other vital military installations.

Each installation brings sizable economic impact within its own community. More importantly, the military and civilian personnel who serve our nation every day -- as well as their families -- provide tremendous sacrifice and deserve our thanks for a courageous commitment to our security.

From my first days in office as Governor, I've been demanding that the Obama administration fulfill ITS own security responsibilities to the citizens of our state: Secure our southern border, enhance the rule of law, and protect Arizonans -- and ALL Americans -- from violence committed by organized crime syndicates, out-of-control drug cartels, violent human smugglers, and common criminals.

Legislation I signed into law -- Senate Bill 1070 -- supported by statewide law enforcement organizations -- and the vast majority of Arizonans -- simply provides local sworn officers the same legal tools provided to federal authorities and their local law enforcement partners for many years.

We've filed an expedited appeal with the Ninth Circuit asking the court to lift Judge Bolton's injunction against certain provisions of SB 1070 and to allow those provisions to go into effect pending a decision on the merits of this case.

You should know, too, that NOT ONE company -- NOT A SINGLE ONE -- has told me or my Commerce team that this issue has been a DETERRENT to choosing Arizona.

I launched a Jobs Action Team -- including Commerce -- State Land -- the Departments of Environmental Quality and Revenue -- directing them to work together to cut through red tape -- and the green tape -- and speed what has been a slow government process.

We can't afford to have jobs languish -- or worse, perish -- because they got caught up in an endless permitting bottleneck.

Bottom line: When it comes to the business operating environment, the quality workforce -- ARIZONA WINS.

That is the case now, and it is my intent to continue improving the business operating environment in my NEXT term.

So, to all of you job creators -- I say THANK YOU -- thank you -- for setting Arizona back on the road to prosperity. We've come so far in the last 600 days. We've changed everything ...

Arizona is moving again.

I believe our state has been revived.

I believe it has been renewed.

I believe faith in OURSELVES has been restored.

Thomas Jefferson once wrote: "I like the dreams of the future better than the history of the past."

I like those dreams, too -- and the sense that a wonderful power of achievement and confidence -- is stirring again in Arizona.

It belongs to our future; so let's nourish it and carefully tend to the fruits that it promises.

God bless you and your families, and may God bless Arizona and the United States of America. Thank you.